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KIDNAPED CLERIC BACK IN U.S. AFTER BEIRUT ORDEAL

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THE REV. Benjamin Weir — kidnaped in Lebanon 16 months ago — is "back in America, safe with his family," President Reagan happily announced yesterday.

But Reagan vowed that he will not rest until six other Americans held hostage in Lebanon have been released.

Weir was sent back to the U.S. alone, it was learned yesterday, when

a secret deal to free all seven American hostages in Lebanon broke down at the last minute — after Arab terrorists raised the stakes.

White House sources told The Post Weir was released so he could serve as go-between to carry his captors' new demands to Reagan.

It is believed that the Islamic Jihad has refused to free the remaining six Americans until 17 Shiite Moslem prisoners convicted of terror bombings in Kuwait are freed.

The unexpected hitch caused by that demand explains why Reagan waited until yesterday to announce that Weir had been released to U.S. authorities in Beirut.

He was released Saturday.

The U.S. has repeatedly declared that it will not deal with terrorists.

Sources familiar with the complex and delicate negotiations to free the Americans said "it was expected" that all seven would be set free last weekend.

They said the expectation was based on the release of the last 119 of 766 Shiite Moslems held in Israeli jails.

President Reagan explained that his administration had kept Weir's release quiet "because we don't want to do anything that endangers the chances of the other six."

The other missing Americans are:

● William Buckley, 56, U.S. Embassy political officer, March 16, 1984.

● Peter Kilburn, 60, a librarian at the Ameri-

can University of Beirut, Dec. 3, 1984.

● The Rev. Lawrence Jenco, 50, a Roman Catholic priest, Jan. 8, 1985.

● Terry Anderson, 37, chief Middle East correspondent for the Associated Press, March 16, 1985.

● David Jacobsen, 54, director of the American University hospital, May 28, 1985.

● Thomas Sutherland, 53, dean of agriculture at the American University, June 9, 1985.